

# Voodoo Vengeance

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

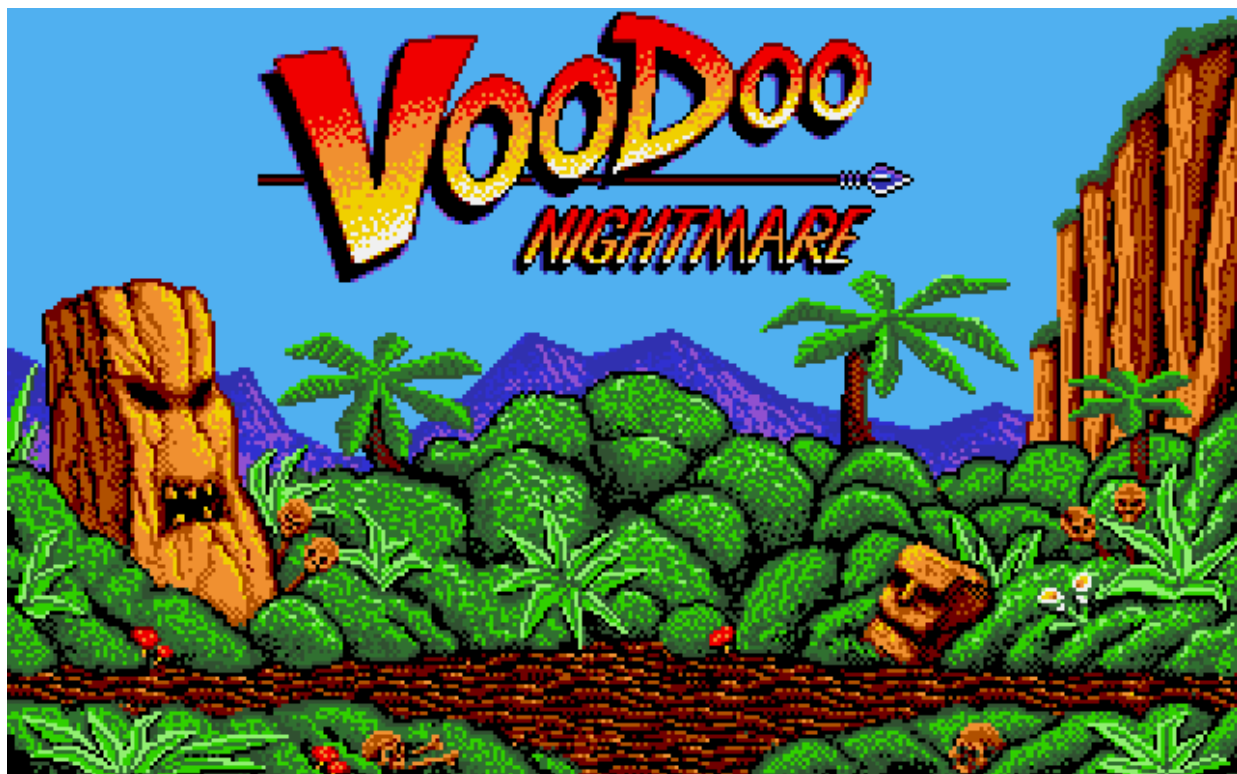
None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

-----

Imagine being stranded in deepest, darkest Africa after being turfed out of a hot air balloon during a sightseeing 'pleasure' trip. You land safely... ish, aside from initially being knocked unconscious, only to find some witch doctor scamp has super-glued a giant lollipop to your head.

Jungle critters terrorise your ankles with their venomous appendages, whilst the natives prepare blow darts and stew pots. Suddenly it dawns on you that the only way to get out alive is to play a really awkward, tricky to control isometric exploration game. What a nightmare! Manchester based Zippo Games certainly thought so.

Voodoo Nightmare is one of those flip-screen 3D maze affairs in the Knight Lore or Head Over Heels mould that no-one makes anymore because they've been supplanted by fully rotating and scaling RPG environments.



You assume the role of Boots Barker, so-called because you see little more of him than that, what with being permanently trapped inside a tribal fancy dress costume.



Somehow you establish that the way to break the witch doctor's curse and breach his underground bunker fortress is to locate a voodoo doll and collect eight magical pins to stick in it. Five of these are found in temples enshrined to various animal deities. To earn them you must snag all the gems in a given temple - some pilfered from secret rooms - and hopefully escape alive. All being well you're rewarded with the treasure already in your possession, as well as extra stamina and a special gift. You won't have received any of these in your Christmas stocking before...

- 'The power to break many webs.' (wait, that's just a hoover isn't it?)
- 'Immunity to snake bites.'
- 'The jewels of eternal light.'
- 'The amulet of secret travel.'
- 'The roar of the jungle.'



Three of the eight pins are instead acquired by solving simple puzzles. Rather like Dizzy fetch quests really. One entails reuniting a lion cub with its mother. In another, you'll

need to source lunch for a monkey, and finally heal a sick native with a traditional remedy bought from the store.





Baddies are dealt with either by jumping on them (only momentarily *stunning* the nuisances after the *initial* bounce), or through use of various weapons purchased from the jungle's answer to Walmart. These it can't escape your notice are staffed by John A. Romero's zombie assistants, while jewels and bananas serve as the accepted currency.



Amongst the goodies on offer are extra throwing knives, a torch, maps, a voodoo doll, a machete, and dynamite. Dynamite and the machete are used to create a path through the dense foliage and inconveniently placed rocks. The other tools require no explanation.

If you're struggling to make ends meet, casinos can be visited to boost your finances/swell your fruit coffers. Although, all the casinos I'm familiar with work the *opposite* way round so these must be special magic ones that reward you for attending. That's a strange business model.





Controls are ungainly to say the least. Because all the landscapes are rotated by 45 degrees, down is no longer down and up is no longer up. I could go on, except I'm sure you catch my drift. You'll get the hang of it eventually I'm sure if you're prepared to stick with it. That's a big 'if'. I suppose you could hold your joystick at the same angle to match.

Easier to get to grips with, fire jumps, unless you're holding a weapon. Then it activates that. Actually, that's not ideal either because you'll need to enter your inventory to deselect weapons whenever you plan not to use them for a while, and who enjoys planning? We'll have none of that sensible nonsense here. We're spontaneous, creative types.

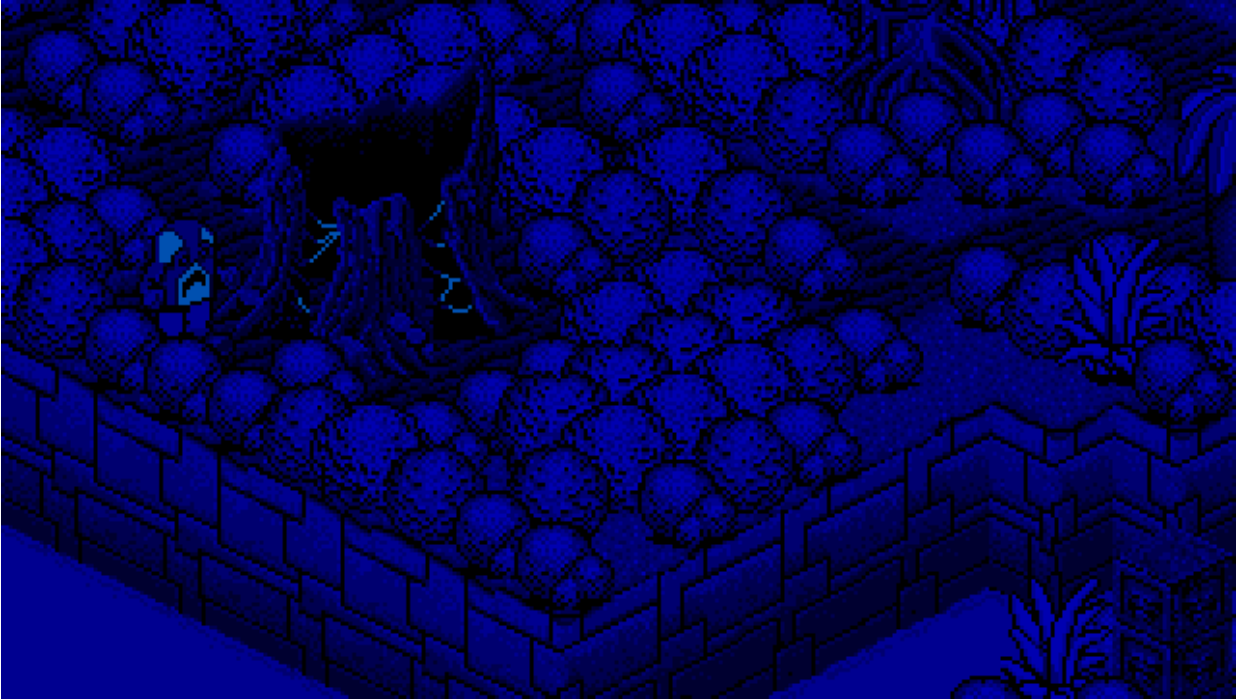
Well, when it suits us anyway. It's possible to save and load your progress at will so dying is never that much of a looming threat. In that sense, the puzzles and exploration are prioritised over the action, and we never have to start again from scratch. Unless we *plan* to.

Environmental 'furniture' can be shifted to reveal hidden items, and floor-pitted teleporters transport you to other parts of the level or currently occupied screen. *Where* is anyone's guess. There can be dozens per screen and the only way to fathom them out is to test them one by one. Not exactly the most exciting game mechanic ever, it has to be said. Especially when you consider that the jungle consists of over 500 individual areas.



Impressive for a primitive RPG-ish title published in 1990, a day-night cycle is in effect. When the sun goes down your view is masked with a blue tinge, and the animals retire for the evening, allowing you to catch your breath and roam about unhindered for a brief spell.



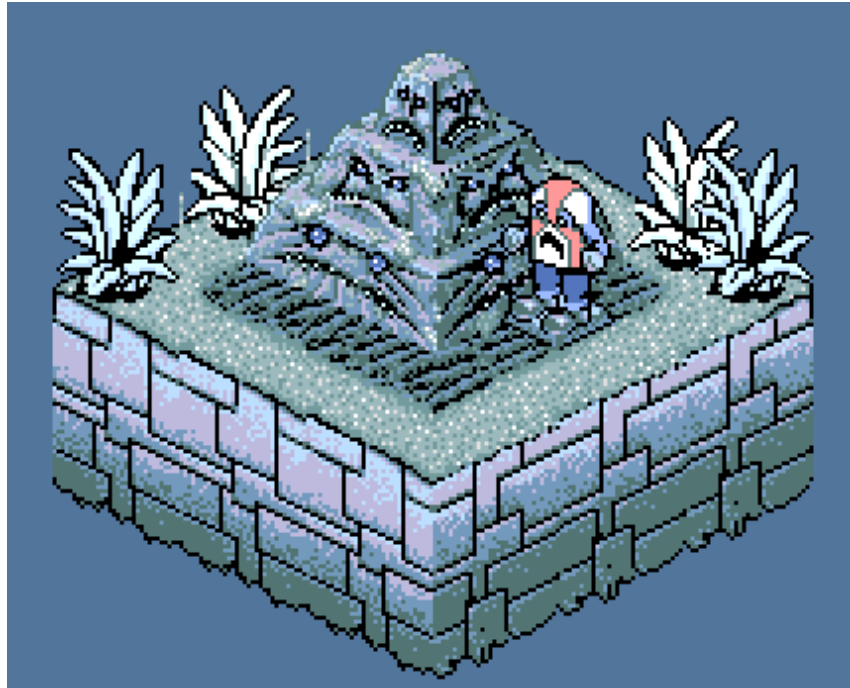


Themed levels add a fair bit of variety to the visuals, yet the structure and mechanics remain the same throughout. Snazzy window dressing all the same; the two artists involved do an excellent job of conveying that exotic Indiana Jones sense of adventure and danger. Nicking the official font goes a long way towards achieving that transparent goal.



Being written fairly briefly, mostly in rhyming couplets, the manual offers few clues as to how to accomplish the mandatory tasks. Part two isn't documented at all so as to ensure it comes as a surprise. It's all extremely well illustrated in the style of a black and white comic so I'll forgive it for being a bit hazy on the fine print. Games *should* be about discovery after all.

Spoiler alert: To survive the second half of the game you'll need to lead four zombies back to their oddly vertical graves, whilst swerving a parade of pestilent skeletons. This activates a pulpit that then ascends to transport you towards the final confrontation with the villain of the piece, the Evil Bocor.



Yes, we find out at the end that the troublemaker has a name, but not why the flipping 'eck he feels it necessary to go round incarcerating innocent balloon evictees inside freaky headgear. That's just weird.

Almost as strange, if we accidentally walk over a gap in one of the dilapidated rope bridges, Boots falls through to his doom. Hold on, *that's* not the strange bit, you'd expect that to happen. As you plummet your lollipop becomes detached suggesting that it wasn't fixed in place by some impenetrable mystical hoodoo after all! Maybe Boots should try unzipping it first next time! It might have saved us all a lot of aggro.



According to the finale text that follows Bocor's demise, Boots was expected to return for a sequel, though never did. That will in part be due to Zippo Games ditching the Amiga to switch to console development.

Also though, to warrant a sequel, the original entry has to be successful, and apparently this *wasn't* to any great extent. I think we had a lucky escape personally. Voodoo Nightmare *looks* enticing with its quirky 'archaeologist' in peril plot and luscious isometric pixel art. However, looks can be deceiving. Scratch just beneath the surface and it's a monotonous chore to plod, I mean *play*. Once you've teleported for the 784th time to a spot on the screen only three inches away from where you started you'll never complain again about having to walk from A to B using your own limbs.